

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims**

1. (Currently Amended) A method for assigning a work item for one of a plurality of nodes in a workflow to at least one of a plurality of users capable of performing workflow related operations at the nodes, comprising:

processing a node in a current workflow, wherein a current work item is associated with the processed node;

processing an access list indicating users capable of being assigned the current work item;

determining from the access list at least one user capable of being assigned the current work item;

for each determined user, determining a number of work items other than the current work item assigned to the user in the current workflow and in a workflow other than the current workflow;

using a load balancing technique that considers the number of work items assigned to the at least one determined user on the access list in the current and the other workflows to select  
~~selecting~~ at least one determined user based on the determined number of work items assigned to the determined users; and

assigning the current work item to the at least one selected determined user.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the determined number of work items assigned to each user includes active work items assigned to the user in workflows other than the current workflow.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the determined number of work items further include active work items assigned to the user in the current workflow other than the current work item.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the determined users comprise users on an access list associated with the current workflow.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein determining the number of work items assigned to each user further comprises:

determining work items for which the user has exclusive access; and

determining work items that are not owned by another user and that are associated with an access list that includes the user.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein using the load balancing technique to select ~~selecting~~ at least one determined user based on the determined number of work items assigned to the determined users further comprises:

for each work item assigned to the user, determining a priority related to the work item;

for each user, calculating an index based on each priority related to each work item assigned to the user; and

using the index to select one user to assign the new work item.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the priority related to the work item comprises a priority assigned to the workflow in which the work item is included.

8. (Original) The method of claim 6, further comprising:

receiving a user defined priority, wherein the user defined priority is the priority related to the work item.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein the user defined priority is for the workflow including the work item assigned to the user.

10. (Original) The method of claim 6, further comprising:

receiving a user defined priority scheme associating a plurality of user defined priorities with a plurality of normalized ratings; and

determining a user defined priority related to the work item, wherein the determined priority related to the work item used to calculate the index comprises the normalized rating associated with the user defined priority.

11. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the selected user comprises the user having a lowest index value.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, further comprising:  
if no one user has the lowest index value, determining from the users having a same lowest index value one user having a least number of assigned work items, wherein the determined user having the least number of assigned work items comprises the selected one user.

13. (Original) The method of claim 6, further comprising:  
using an arbitrary criteria to select one user if no user is selected using the user indexes.

14. (Original) The method of claim 6, further comprising:  
using the index to determine at least one additional user to assign the new work item.

15. (Currently Amended) A system method for assigning a work item in a workflow, comprising:

a storage device;

a database in the storage device, wherein the database includes a plurality of workflows, wherein each workflow includes a plurality of nodes and work items, wherein during execution of the workflow, the work items for the nodes are assigned to users capable of performing workflow related operations at the nodes, comprising:

an access list indicating users capable of being assigned the current work item;

means for processing a node in a current workflow, wherein a current work item is associated with the processed node;

means for determining from the access list users capable of being assigned the current work item;

means for determining, for each determined user, a number of work items other than the current work item assigned to the user in the current workflow and in a workflow other than the current workflow;

means for using a load balancing technique that considers the number of work items assigned to the at least one determined user on the access list in the current and the other workflows to select ~~selecting~~ at least one determined user based on the determined number of work items assigned to the determined users; and

means for assigning the current work item to the at least one selected determined user.

16. (Original) The system of claim 15, wherein the determined number of work items assigned to each user includes active work items assigned to the user in workflows other than the current workflow.

17. (Original) The system of claim 16, wherein the determined number of work items further include active work items assigned to the user in the current workflow other than the current work item.

18. (Original) The system of claim 15, wherein the determined users comprise users on an access list associated with the current workflow.

19. (Original) The system of claim 15, wherein the means for determining the number of work items assigned to each user further performs:

determining work items for which the user has exclusive access; and

determining work items that are not owned by another user and that are associated with an access list that includes the user.

20. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 15, wherein the means for using the load balancing technique to select ~~selecting~~ at least one determined user based on the determined number of work items assigned to the determined users further performs:

for each work item assigned to the user, determining a priority related to the work item;

for each user, calculating an index based on each priority related to each work item assigned to the user; and  
using the index to select one user to assign the new work item.

21. (Original) The system of claim 20, wherein the priority related to the work item comprises a priority assigned to the workflow in which the work item is included.

22. (Original) The system of claim 20, further comprising:  
means for receiving a user defined priority, wherein the user defined priority is the priority related to the work item.

23. (Original) The system of claim 22, wherein the user defined priority is for the workflow including the work item assigned to the user.

24. (Original) The system of claim 20, further comprising:  
means for receiving a user defined priority scheme associating a plurality of user defined priorities with a plurality of normalized ratings; and  
means for determining a user defined priority related to the work item, wherein the determined priority related to the work item used to calculate the index comprises the normalized rating associated with the user defined priority.

25. (Original) The system of claim 20, wherein the means for selecting the user selects the user having a lowest index value.

26. (Original) The system of claim 25, further comprising:  
means for determining, if no one user has the lowest index value, one user having a least number of assigned work items from the users having a same lowest index value, wherein the determined user having the least number of assigned work items comprises the selected one user.

27. (Original) The system of claim 20, further comprising:  
means for using an arbitrary criteria to select one user if no user is selected using the user indexes.

28. (Original) The system of claim 20, further comprising:  
means for using the index to determine at least one additional user to assign the new work item.

29. (Currently Amended) An article of manufacture including code for assigning a work item for one of a plurality of nodes in a workflow to at least one of a plurality of users capable of performing workflow related operations at the nodes by:  
processing a node in a current workflow, wherein a current work item is associated with the processed node;  
processing an access list indicating users capable of being assigned the current work item;  
determining from the access list at least one user capable of being assigned the current work item;  
for each determined user, determining a number of work items other than the current work item assigned to the user in the current workflow and in a workflow other than the current workflow;  
using a load balancing technique that considers the number of work items assigned to the at least one determined user on the access list in the current and the other workflows to select  
~~selecting~~ at least one determined user based on the determined number of work items assigned to the determined users; and  
assigning the current work item to the at least one selected determined user.

30. (Original) The article of manufacture of claim 29, wherein the determined number of work items assigned to each user includes active work items assigned to the user in workflows other than the current workflow.

31. (Original) The article of manufacture of claim 30, wherein the determined number of work items further include active work items assigned to the user in the current workflow other than the current work item.

32. (Original) The article of manufacture of claim 29, wherein the determined users comprise users on an access list associated with the current workflow.

33. (Original) The article of manufacture of claim 29, wherein determining the number of work items assigned to each user further comprises:  
determining work items for which the user has exclusive access; and  
determining work items that are not owned by another user and that are associated with an access list that includes the user.

34. (Currently Amended) The article of manufacture of claim 29, wherein using the load balancing technique to select ~~selecting~~ at least one determined user based on the determined number of work items assigned to the determined users further comprises:  
for each work item assigned to the user, determining a priority related to the work item;  
for each user, calculating an index based on each priority related to each work item assigned to the user; and  
using the index to select one user to assign the new work item.

35. (Original) The article of manufacture of claim 34, wherein the priority related to the work item comprises a priority assigned to the workflow in which the work item is included.

36. (Original) The article of manufacture of claim 34, further comprising:  
receiving a user defined priority, wherein the user defined priority is the priority related to the work item.

37. (Original) The article of manufacture of claim 36, wherein the user defined priority is for the workflow including the work item assigned to the user.

38. (Original) The article of manufacture of claim 34, further comprising:  
receiving a user defined priority scheme associating a plurality of user defined priorities with a plurality of normalized ratings; and  
determining a user defined priority related to the work item, wherein the determined priority related to the work item used to calculate the index comprises the normalized rating associated with the user defined priority.

39. (Original) The article of manufacture of claim 34, wherein the selected user comprises the user having a lowest index value.

40. (Original) The article of manufacture of claim 39, further comprising:  
if no one user has the lowest index value, determining from the users having a same lowest index value one user having a least number of assigned work items, wherein the determined user having the least number of assigned work items comprises the selected one user.

41. (Original) The article of manufacture of claim 34, further comprising:  
using an arbitrary criteria to select one user if no user is selected using the user indexes.

42. (Original) The article of manufacture of claim 34, further comprising:  
using the index to determine at least one additional user to assign the new work item.